

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPU #0186 0542104
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 232103Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0390
INFO HAITI COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

UNCLAS PORT AU PRINCE 000186

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [HA](#) [PINR](#) [AID](#) [EAID](#) [KDEM](#)
SUBJECT: PREVAL'S PARLIAMENTARY UPPER-HAND

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Parliament re-established itself quickly after the earthquake, setting up special commissions and trying to re-assert its role as a watchdog. Despite calls by opposition parliamentarians for changes in government, President Preval still has the upper-hand because of the body's contested legitimacy and Preval's political clout ahead of eventual elections. Preval could sideline Parliament after May 2010 and make limited concessions only as needed. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Within a few days of the earthquake, Parliament re-established itself on the grounds of the Haitian National Police Academy and focused on its watchdog role and on debating a strategy for reconstruction. Several opposition parliamentarians, however, quickly called for changes in PM Bellerive's cabinet, citing the government inefficiencies in managing relief efforts, and requested meetings with Bellerive and several of his key Ministers. Bellerive responded only once, appearing at a Senate hearing on February 2. Bellerive told Embassy officials in private he did not expect Parliament to be cooperative with his government, and that the GOH could sideline Parliament to concentrate on relief efforts.

¶3. (SBU) Parliament does not pose a threat to Preval and Bellerive's ability to govern. Parliament's legitimacy can be contested. The mandates of the entire Lower Chamber and one third of the Senate were due to expire in January, but were extended by the lawmakers until May, a move most observers deemed unconstitutional. The move further weakened the image of an institution already considered inefficient by many political actors and observers, and makes the opposition's relative and fragile majority in Parliament practically irrelevant.

¶4. (SBU) Preval still carries significant influence in both the Lower Chamber and the Senate. Most parliamentarians expect February's elections to be rescheduled for November or early 2011, and the same logic that gave Preval a majority in parliament before the earthquake - the expectation that an alignment with Preval was a quasi-guarantee for reelection - still applies. Most importantly, of the 19 Senators whose mandates will be valid beyond May 2010, 11 or 12 are Preval allies. Senator Joseph Lambert, a former Senate President and leader of Preval's Inite party, told PolOff that Preval still held a comfortable majority in the Senate, despite "the defection of some into the opposition camp." Several of the voices who now call for a change in government, including Senators Jean Hector Anacasis and Maxime Roumer, voted to oust Prime Minister Michele Pierre-Louis just four months ago, and approved Bellerive within a week. Both Levaillant Louis-Jeune and Kely Bastien, respectively Presidents of the Lower Chamber and the

Senate, as well as other parliamentarians, privately have expressed their support for Preval and his government.

¶5. (SBU) In addition, Parliament (reduced to 19 Senators beyond May 2010) will require a quorum of 16 Senators for any vote. Despite Preval's slim majority in the Senate after May, the opposition (between five and seven Senators, depending on the mood of the day) should be able to block a quorum as a means of veto (a tool that is used often in Haitian parliamentary politics). This would effectively paralyze Parliament, and would enable Preval and Bellerive to marginalize the legislative branch. Opposition Senators Youri Latortue and Evalliere Beauplan both conceded that the Senate could only function based on consensus between the opposition and Preval's allies beyond May.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Parliament's quick re-establishment impressed many observers. However, parliament's legitimacy is contested and remains equally discredited in the minds of the population, despite a weakened executive branch. In addition, Preval is still influential in Parliament and the Senate in particular, and could sideline the institution if it does not support him. Preval has shown little interest in genuinely reaching out to opposition parliamentarians thus far, and Post doubts he will find it in his interest to reach out to a fragmented and largely unpopular opposition in the remainder of his term.

MERTEN